

either hope or pain (73). Several delve further into the prison experience by discussing how one can expand one's space within the confines of a prison. Tray, for example, doesn't feel his space is restricted; he imagines himself on an odyssey. "I believe I'm here because I lost my road. That's what I'm searching around for, the road to the larger society. In the meanwhile I'm supposed to be restricted but my ideas don't have to be, and that's where I find all my freedom" (75). He goes on to say, "When I was on the street, I had less space than I do in prison. I would only associate with the criminal elements... Since I've been in prison, I've met people with sophistication, people from different races...My horizons have expanded (75).

Building on his students' comments, Leder notes, "Our Heidegger text suggests that we live in a world proportionate to our concern" (80), suggesting that too often we keep at a distance that which we want to avoid. "I remember when Rwanda hit the front pages, and then Bosnia, and I decided *I just don't want to know*. Why open myself to suffering that I can do so little to fix? But entering prison, I realized that the sphere of pain seemed more limited, the possibilities of helping clearer. And I found my heart opening up to the men" (81).

The Soul Knows no Bars invites us to see prisons and their residents and to see teaching itself in new ways. I am grateful for what Leder and his student-colleagues have allowed me to see.

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Couldn't Keep It to Myself: Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters

Wally Lamb and the Women of York Correctional Institution. HarperCollins, 2003.
Hardback, \$24.95, Paper \$13.95

Gretchen Schumacher, Oregon

The book *Couldn't Keep It to Myself: Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters* by Wally Lamb and his writers group of women at a New York Maximum Security Correctional Facility would be an enjoyable read for anyone wishing to learn more about the prison experience. It is a book of autobiographical short stories written by the women in the writing group and edited by Wally Lamb. What Wally Lamb discovered was that women in prison have a lot to say. I was fascinated to learn that this book even existed. It is not only educational, but touching and emotional as well.

What the Sisters in this book are telling the readers about is their personal experiences and their lives. They convey to the reading public what it is that might be different about those of us in prison from those of us outside. It was been said, "We write to expose the unexposed...." One thing I have found to be true in my life is that because I am a "convict," I cannot be a victim. Yet statis-

tics show, and the Sisters' stories reveal, that a very large percentage of female prisoners were at one time victims to a very sad degree.

I have never hurt anyone in ways that I have seen hurts. Hurt is when your father rapes you because you turned ten years old and it turned him on. Or when you have a husband who beats you because your hair did not hold the style he prefers. I have seen these hurts, though thankfully I have never experienced them. Being raped well over a thousand times was enough. And being beaten because I did not wish to be raped. That hurt I have personally kissed and embraced. And now to be imprisoned and deemed not fit to live in Society.

Lamb reflects, "Women of all means are schooled in silence.... To imprison a woman is to remove her voice from the world" (9). Through the educational writing class conducted by Wally Lamb, these women were given back their voices and for a time were therefore free.

In my experience with prison, there are things that I, too, simply cannot keep to myself. In Oregon in 1984, the women's prison population was 120, and it was said that the prison was overcrowded. At that time I was young and thought of prison as something similar to summer camp. Today, the women's population exceeds 700, and I now see prison more like a concentration camp.

Excluded from our prison these days are educational opportunities. Fortunately, what are still included are our first amendment rights. Therefore, even though some would prefer women to be silent, I have a voice and get to express myself. This is also true for the women in Wally Lamb's writing class.

Deborah C. Smith, Portland State University, Oregon

I've just finished reading Wally Lamb's newest book, written in collaboration with women from York Correctional Institution, *Couldn't Keep it to Myself: Testimonies From Our Imprisoned Sisters*. I am enraged, inspired, defeated and hopeful, all at once.

Lamb's book allows us a glimpse into the lives of women prisoners. Through honest and revealing stories written by the women themselves, we begin to understand some of the factors that led to their incarceration. As a teacher at York, Dale Griffith, states in the book: "It's tempting to slap a label on an inmate and lock her up, rather than look beneath the surface of her conviction to the complexities that shaped her for prison" (343). The stories by and of the women in Lamb's book show us what's beneath the surface and allow us to consider some of those complexities. My rage arises from the fact that so many women prisoners have been shaped by sexual and/or physical and/or emotional abuse. I feel defeated: Like many of the criminal defendants I have known and worked with closely, most of these women don't belong in prison. I am inspired and hopeful: Through participating in the writing workshop with Wally Lamb, and through writing their own stories, these women have been able to

begin to heal. What's more, they have offered an incredible gift to the many readers who will learn something profound from that healing process.

I am reading this book during a time of transition in my own life. For the past ten years, I've been a criminal defense lawyer, representing mostly indigent clients—men and women, adults and juveniles—charged with everything ranging from Driving While Suspended and misdemeanor Theft to Rape, Assault, and Attempted Murder. I can't tell you how many times in the past ten years I've been asked the quintessential question posed to those of us who defend the accused: "How can you defend someone who is guilty?"

"Guilty." What does this mean?

Recently, I represented a 15 year old boy charged with Robbery and Kidnapping. He and a friend of his attempted a carjack, made bold by the guns they held and the drugs they had taken. They ordered a man out of his car so they could take a ride, except, once in the car, they realized they couldn't drive stick. They ordered the man back into the car and made him drive them around. Later, after the "joyride," they dropped the man off and left the car in a lot and walked away. Both boys were easily apprehended a short time later.

As a young child, my client was removed by the state from his drug addict mother, then bounced from foster home to foster home. Before being removed from his home, this boy had unexpectedly walked in on his father raping his sister. When he realized he'd been caught, my client's father told him that if he ever told, his father would find him and kill him. I sat with this boy as he revealed this awful fact about his life to me, this deepest pain he suffered, in a little, windowless, concrete visiting room in juvenile detention. I am the only one he ever told. He exploded with the awful secret one day, tears, snot, punching the concrete wall, ripping at his own hair.

At sentencing, no one but me was with this boy in the courtroom. No family. No one. The judge was clearly disturbed by the eight-year term of imprisonment he was about to order, but he had no discretion. (Per ORS 137.700, Oregon judges have no discretion in sentencing defendants—including juveniles 15 and over—convicted of proscribed crimes.)

The judge asked my client if he'd had a chance to discuss the situation with anyone other than me, his attorney. He hadn't. The judge asked the boy where his mother was. My client replied matter-of-factly that his mother hadn't cared about him in years, that she stopped paying attention to him a long time ago. Visibly shaken, the judge nevertheless imposed the sentence. I wonder if he slept that night.

Most of the world sees my client as a "bad kid." I see him as a casualty. We saw the train coming, and we watched it wreck. Then we stood by, acting surprised. "Bad kid!" we exclaimed.

My perfectly friendly and polite 15 year-old client, who made me a card for

Mother's Day accompanied by a computer generated self-portrait, held a gun to someone and demanded their property. Isn't this really an indictment of us all? How could we have raised him to think this was no big deal? Why wasn't he in school? Couldn't we have seen and addressed his pain earlier? Why did he have such easy access to a gun? To drugs? Do we really think that locking him up for eight years in prison is going to make him a better citizen? That it's going to make us safer?

"Guilty"?

I have hundreds of stories like these. I could go on and on and on with the stories of the people I have worked with and been proud to represent. Human beings, like me, like you.

After ten years of defending the accused, I am "burning out." When I tell people this, they say, "Oh yes, it must be hard to work with 'those people.'" I reply that, yes, it is very difficult. And then I clarify that the people I am referring to who make my job so difficult are the prosecutors, not my clients. For the most part, over the years, I have liked my clients. Some I have loved. There have been a few I wouldn't want to run into on the street, but only a few. The majority have been decent people. Decent human beings. No, it's not my clients who make me tired. I am tired from ramming headlong into a system that is so extremely shortsighted and cares only about being "tough on crime." A system that doesn't pay attention to what works in terms of rehabilitation. A recent Bureau of Justice report indicates that imprisonment rose 2.6 percent in 2002, even though crime rates dropped (AP, July 27, 2003). In response, a friend of mine, another public defender named Joel Greenberg, jokes that we should all be given a presumed prison sentence when we are born, and it should be our burden, when we turn 18, to prove we don't have to go. Is this where our system is headed?

My transition, then, comes in the form of a career change. I am going to come at this from a different angle. Instead of fighting, case-by-case, on the front lines of this battle, I am going to be facilitating service learning seminars at Portland State University, involving students in juvenile justice issues in this community. I am thrilled about this new opportunity. I hope to encourage students to become actively involved in examining the underlying complexities that shape people for prison. I hope to support students in thinking critically about the prison industrial complex. I hope to engage students in thought and discussion about what works in terms of reformation, and to critically examine the concept of "guilt," asking, Where are we, as a society, at fault? As Wally Lamb has noted, "There are things [people] need to know about prison and prisoners. There are misconceptions to be abandoned, biases to be dropped. There are a heart and a mind that need opening. There are many" (17). Can I help open one mind? Many?

Reflecting on *Couldn't Keep it to Myself*, York Correctional Institution inmate Bonnie Foreshaw, serving 45 years without parole for homicide, says, "What I hope is that people reading this book will realize that we are human beings first, inmates second" (Lamb et al. 209).

I know this much is true; I can't keep it to myself.

Wall Tappings: An International Anthology of Women's Prison Writings 200 to the Present

Second edition, ed. Judith A. Scheffler, foreword by Tracy Huling. New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2002. 329 pp., \$18.95

Clarinda Harris, Towson University, MD

Women's bodies do two things that make women easier to punish than men: menstruate and give birth. That biology controls the destiny of women in prison is obvious in the statistics alone, from the 'positive side' (women's generally less violent offenses and shorter sentences), to the most negative (the frequency with which incarcerated women, unlike men, remain the primary caregivers of families even during their incarceration, a situation often resulting in the break-down of the family and a second generation of incarcerates).

Editor Judith Scheffler's decision to expand the geographical and temporal parameters of *Wall Tappings* in a second edition of this superb anthology makes the point that women's unique vulnerability in prison has been the case always and everywhere. Saint Perpetua, a Christian martyr from Carthage imprisoned in the year 200, wrote

After a few days we were taken to prison, and I grew frightened, for I had never known such darkness. . . intense heat. . . extortions by soldiers. Above all, I was tormented with anxiety, on account of my child. . . . Arranged by a bribe, they let us out into a better, cooler part of the prison for a few hours. Coming out of the dungeon. . . I breast-fed my child, who was already weak with hunger.

Anyone who has had personal experience with female prisoners' visiting days will feel kinship with the scene, and, since most of us arrive with bags of urgently-needed toiletries, this next scene will resonate, too. The author is Beatrice Saubin, a French émigré to Malaysia, jailed on drug charges:

In the royal prison of Penang, a woman's period was one more humiliation to bear. Tampons were unheard of, and sanitary pads were banned. Too many women would have thrown them down the three holes that served as our toilets, clogging the pipes. . . Each month the poorest prisoners . . . were doled out two sheets of thick paper similar to the paper used for wrapping packages. They'd rub them together for a long time to soften them. Then they'd tear them into strips and